The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

VOL. XIV. JANUARY 21, 1949 TEBET 20, 5709 No. 19

- ***EXPERIMENTING WITH A PIONEER SYNAGOGUE***

  By Samuel Penner

- ***THE YIVO ON THE JEWISH SCENE***

  By Shlomo Noble

- ***KARL WOLFSKEHL'S "LAST WORD"***

  By Bertha Badt-Strauss

- ***RANDOM THOUGHTS***

  By M. M. K.

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Eretz Yisrael, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues, starting in October, by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y. Subscription $3.00 per year; 15¢ per copy; foreign 25¢ extra; membership in the Foundationn, $5.00 per year, including subscription to *The Reconstructionist.* Reentered as second class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Chairman: **Mordecai M. Kaplan**

Associate Chairman: **Ira Eisenstein**

Managing Editor: **Eugene Kohn**

Associate Editors: **Israel S. Chipkin, Jack J. Cohen, Theodore Friedman, Roland B. Gittelsohn, Jacob S. Golub, Emanuel Green, Will Herberg, Aharon Kessler, Immanuel Lewy, Milton Steinberg, Max Wiener.**

Contributing Editors: **Morris Adler, Michael Alper, Bertha Badt-Strauss, Nathan A. Barack, Morton M. Berman, Philip S. Bernstein, Asher Block, Samuel M. Blumenfield, William Boxerman, Ethel Cohen, Mortimer J. Cohen, Lawrence W. Crohn, Samuel Dinin, Judith K. Eisenstein, U. Z. Engelman, Judah I. Goldin, Albert A. Goldman, Robert Gordis, Bernard Heller, Frieda Clark Hyman, Oscar Karbach, Edward Klein, Samuel C. Kohs, Milton Konvitz, Myer S. Kripke, Mark M. Krug, Theodore N. Lewis, David Polish, Lionel Reiss, Edward T. Sandrow, Norman Schanin, Morton Seidenfeld, Frank Trager, Leo Trepp, Max Weine, Bernard Weinryb, Jacob J. Weinstein.**

Executive Secretary: **Hannah L. Goldberg.**

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

SHLOMO NOBLE is assistant to the research director of Yivo.

SAMUEL PENNER is rabbi of the Herzl Congregation, Seattle, Washington.

BERTHA BADT-STRAUSS is well known in the field of Jewish education and is a contributing editor to *The Reconstructionist.*

NOW READY FOR DISTRIBUTION

"The Religion of the Jewish Prayer Book"

A Study Syllabus

$1.00 per copy

90 cents to members of the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation and in quantities of 10 or more copies.

CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY

THE NEXT STEP IN ORGANIZING THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Sponsored by the

JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FOUNDATION, Inc.

February 6, 1949 — 2:00 P.M. — 8:00 P.M.

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

Participants: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Israel Chipkin, Louis Kraft, Oscar Janowsky, Albert I. Gordon, Henry Hurwitz.

GENERAL DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

Admission by Invitation Only

Invitations may be obtained by writing or telephoning the

JEWISH RECONSTRUCTION FOUNDATION

15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y.

TRafalgar 4-4462

The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. XIV. January 21, 1949 Tebet 20, 5709 No. 19

EDITORIALS

BRITAIN'S HYPOCRISY WEARS THIN

"HYPOCRISY," it has been said, "is the tribute which vice pays to virtue." If so, the government of Great Britain has been paying virtue a heavy tribute. But no matter how massive that tribute, it is not enough to ransom the soul of British officialdom from the deep damnation of its perfidy, a perfidy directed against Israel, against the United Nations and against the peace of the world.

First, when Britain still held the Mandate over Palestine, her government tried to conceal its deliberate betrayal of its solemn responsibilities to the Jewish people by posing as the reluctant arbiter trying to do justice to conflicting claims of Arabs and Jews under an impossible Mandate. It professed to be eager to get out of Palestine altogether and turn it over to the United Nations. That it referred the problem to the United Nations only because it expected the UN to be subservient to its interests became apparent immediately when the Assembly passed the partition resolution. Then Great Britain's Arab allies (she now admits and indeed proclaims that they have been allies all along) threatened armed aggression, and Great Britain at once proceeded to sabotage the partition; she forbade the UN Commission to proceed to Palestine until her Mandate was terminated. In this way she was sure—never mind how many lives were lost in consequence, or how the welfare of the Near Eastern peoples would be jeopardized — of creating a chaos that would result in her being given a new mandate over Palestine with no obligations to the Jewish people.

Her scheme met with partial success. In that part of Palestine which was assigned to the Jewish people, a state emerged, but in the remainder, she succeeded in creating chaos as justification for Palestine's invasion by Britain's Arab allies. To be sure, she did not then proclaim them to be her allies. On the contrary, she professed a strict neutrality between these invaders and Israel, which was struggling for its very existence. Had her allies been successful, she would have accepted the *fait acompli* and set up a puppet government to rule Palestine exclusively in the interest of the British Empire and the governing puppets. The Arab armies, however, were defeated; so she began waging peace against Israel. Through her influence on the Security Council, that body imposed a succession of truces calculated to keep the invaders in the land. Ostensibly both sides were threatened with sanctions if the truce were violated, but the *status quo*

which the truce was designed to preserve was favorable to the aggressors. Moreover, Britain did all in her power to make that unjust *status quo* permanent and even to give the Arab states politically what they were unable to obtain militarily. That is the obvious meaning of her advocacy of the Bernadotte Report with the shameless theft of the Negev which it contemplated.

These sinister designs failed, principally because the United States refused to become a party to the nefarious plot. As a result, Egypt found herself forced to enter into negotiations with Israel. Britain was rendered desperate by the prospect of peace in the Middle East. She therefore ignored the United Nations and the United States and resorted to a naked threat of armed intervention to prevent a settlement which would not give her her coveted prize—the Negev. To justify that threat, she provoked a border incident by sending her flyers in formation with Egyptian planes over the battle area.

How long will the other nations of the world allow Great Britain to play the bull in a china shop in the Middle East? How long will they pretend not to see through the hypocrisy that expresses holy horror at Israel's pursuing the invader back into his own territory, when the invasion itself was so obviously condoned, if not connived at, by Britain? How long will they tolerate Britain's detention of Jewish refugees in the Cyprus concentration camps because persons of military age must not be admitted to Israel, while she cooperates with the Egyptian air forces and concentrates men and arms on the Transjordan border of the Negev? The shoddy robe of British hypocrisy is wearing so thin that it can no longer conceal that she is carrying a pistol in her pocket and has her finger on the trigger.

The situation can be summed up very simply. Great Britain covets the Negev. She means to possess it by hook or crook, either directly or through a satellite Arab regime. Not having succeeded in persuading the United Nations to give it to her, she proposes to take it at the point of a gun. Our government should cry, "Stop thief!" in no uncertain tone.

INDONESIA, THE WORLD, AND ISRAEL

APPRAISING the speedy and almost total success they have achieved in Indonesia, the Dutch must be congratulating themselves right now on their daring and efficiency. No doubt, too, they consider the entire episode as virtually closed. After all, aside from a handful of last-ditch Indonesian guerillas, whom or what need they fear? The Security Council? But the Security Council, as they well know, is itself made up in part of Colonial powers who can be counted on to stand by one another. To this conclusion the Dutch have been encouraged by the behavior of these very Colonial powers on the Palestine issue, for, of course, the governments which have been most insistent on vigorous action against Israel are the ones which obstruct any action whatsoever against the Netherlands, Arab effendis and Dutch planters being "opposite numbers" in the two situations.

Only the United States could give Holland occasion for fear, and the first rumble of American thunder in the Security Council was properly awesome. But even at the very start, when ERP funds were cut off from the Dutch East Indies, the United States State Department went out of its way to make it very clear that that move was limited to funds earmarked for the Netherland Indies and did not touch the homeland at all. And a few days later, to our shame be it

noted, the lion, like Bottom in Midsummer Night's Dream, was roaring "an 'twere any nightingale."

So reason the victors in the hour of their miserable triumph. But, like all those "whose faith is in themselves," the Dutch are not yet done with this wretched business.

A tide is rising in the Far East, not only in Indonesia but in all the islands and continents which so long have served as a preserve for Western exploitation—a tidal demand for freedom, dignity and a decent life. Not even mighty America could turn back such a rising sea, let alone puny Holland. It could have been a democratic tide, based on and dedicated to the principles of libertarianism. No small part of the crime of the Dutch is that they have diverted the current toward Communism.

Of the new spirit of the Far East a vivid and significant evidence has just been given the world. Jawaharal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, has convoked a conference of Asiatic peoples to consider the Indonesian problem. That part of the Orient which has, of late, become self-determining, which has already experienced an upsurge of nationalism, is now rallying to the as yet less mature and self-reliant nationalisms of other Eastern peoples.

This is a turn of events to be welcomed and cheered — and that, despite the pitfalls into which this Oriental solidarity is likely to fall: the temptation to make of this crisis an issue of color, after the precedent of the Japanese, or of economic ideology, according to the Communist stereotype. Conceivably, too, since the Arab states have been invited to participate and would, to a superficial glance, appear the analogues of the Indonesians, the conference might, among other things, come out with pro-Arab, anti-Israel pronouncements.

Nonetheless, despite all these perils, this conference has great potentialities for good. It is always good for men to assemble for the purpose of assuring freedom to themselves and their fellows. We therefore wish well to Nehru and those who assemble at his invitation. Among other things we wish that they shall so conduct their affairs as to give to the momentarily complacent Dutch abundant occasion to rue their deeds.

* * *

As for Israel — which is involved in this problem, and that by no means after the fashion of the elephant and the Jewish problem — what ought to be its policy?

Insofar as this becomes an issue of East against West in the ideological sense, Israel should remain strictly neutral. Like Switzerland, it must exist in the midst of wars, cold or hot as the case may be, but without being involved in them. The security of Israel, its needs, the already deep political divisions in it, above all the unfinished business before it do not permit it to take sides with the one Titan or the other.

Insofar, however, as the issue is one of colonialism versus self-determination, Israel belongs naturally on the side of Nehru's conference. Having cherished freedom through millennia, having won it for itself only recently, the Jewish people cannot be anything but sympathetic to others in their quest for freedom. It would be the height of folly were the conference to fall for the propaganda line which identifies Zionism with Western imperialism.

Insofar, finally, as the issue is one of East versus West in the sense of culture—here may well be Israel's "rendezvous with destiny." This is the issue for the mediation of which Israel is singularly equipped. All these years we Zionists have been talking about a Jewish State

as a bridge between the Orient and Occident. Many hopes have come true sooner than we had ever dared expect, perhaps this one also will be fulfilled "speedily and in our days."

* * *

Meantime, a task remains for all Americans: to put into our State Department firmness and determination toward the right. It is still not too late for such a temper on our part to be of consequence in Indonesia; it will be of great utility toward the prevention of similar outrages in the future.

STATE OF THE UNION

MR. TRUMAN'S message on the State of the Union warmed many a heart which was dismal and chilled a little more than two months ago at the almost certain prospect of reactionary relapse. It was a strong message. It was a good message. Parts of it read like the Franklin Roosevelt of early New Deal days; the sum of it is even bolder and more comprehensive than many of Mr. Roosevelt's messages.

We liked especially the sober, balanced honesty of the President's approach. He pulled no punches, but neither was he vindictive or unfair toward anyone. If we were to excerpt one sentence for framing in the halls of the Eighty-First Congress, it would be the words used by Mr. Truman after he had listed, with devastating restraint, the shortcomings of our democracy. "Each of these shortcomings," he said, "is also an opportunity—an opportunity for the Congress and the President to work for the good of the people."

What seems to distinguish this message most from earlier requests the President sent to "the hill" is not only its comprehensiveness, but even more the fact that it holds out so much more promise of accomplishment. There were times during his previous terms also when he cheered us with his words, but we had grown to listen skeptically and to expect no tangible results. In part, this was his own fault: — sometimes he seemed to have no notion how to accomplish the goals he had set forth; at other times the methods and means he embraced were altogether inconsistent with the ends he had projected.

To an even greater degree the schizophrenic Eightieth Congress was to blame, —a Congress which at times seemed to have no policy except to say *nay* to Mr. Truman's every *yea*. The only reference to the last Congress and the sole note of weariness in this otherwise buoyant and confident message is in the President's aside after recommending action on the St. Lawrence power project: "This is about the fifth time I've recommended it."

But this time the entire setting is different. Mr. Truman sounded like a man who has just discovered his own strength and who knows with confident conviction exactly where he wants to go. And the Congress to which he addressed himself is clearly controlled not only by his own party, but — more important — by his own section of that party. The Democratic Dixiecrats had been effectively repudiated by the people on November 2.

This last is of special importance in view of Mr. Truman's strong reiteration of his stand on Civil Rights. On that, as on every other aspect of the new liberalism, none of the obstacles which frustrated us so miserably in the past need hamper us any longer. A strong President has spoken decisively. A dominant political party and reconstructed Congress have heard. The President's plea for cooperation comes obviously out of strength, not weakness. Should either the Democratic Party or the Congress

fail to heed it, we have no doubt he will go to the people again, as he did during the campaign, to point his finger where blame belongs.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Truman's forthcoming statement on foreign policy will chart the course of our international affairs as intelligently and courageously as his State of the Union message dealt with domestic matters. That he realizes the relationship between the two is evident from his statement that "our domestic programs are the foundation of our foreign policy." The opposite is equally true. Our foreign policy will likewise have an immediate effect on domestic affairs. We cannot be reactionary in the one and liberal in the other. Furthermore, unless we succeed very shortly in achieving the kind of ordered international society in which the oppressive burden of expenditures for the military can be at least gradually lightened, the President's eloquent plea for a "fair deal" at home will necessarily go begging for funds.

The appointment of Dean Acheson to succeed General Marshall gives ground for hope that the two halves of Mr. Truman's policy will hold together. We await his message on foreign policy with hopeful anticipation.

The President has kept faith with those who elected him. He has demonstrated that he understands why and for what he was returned to the White House. May Congress do as well!

REALITIES AND VALUES

IT IS HOPED THAT THE NEGOtiations for an armistice between Egypt and Israel will prove the prelude to a peace settlement between Israel and all the Arab states. But it will require more than a series of treaties, however wisely and justly these may be drawn up, to establish friendly and cooperative relations between Israelis and Arabs. Much will depend on the attitude of the state to Arab refugees who may wish to return to Israel.

Two recent items of news are encouraging as evidence of a fair and sensible attitude toward the problem on the part of the Israeli government.

Dr. Abraham Granovsky, president of the Jewish National Fund, warned against any illusions that lands left behind by Palestine Arabs who fled the country during the early months of the Arab-Israeli fighting could be confiscated by the Israeli Government.

Minister of Agriculture in the Israeli Government, Aaron Zisling, has announced that half a million dunams of waste lands and holdings abandoned because of the war are being cultivated by settlement farmers, new settlers and landless Arab farmers, and that an Arab farm cooperative has been established with financial assistance from the government. These measures do not affect ownership rights.

▼

AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE economic adjustment of the new immigrants to Israel from the DP camps in Europe is being played by the ORT. That organization has all along been giving vocational training to DPs to enable them to support themselves in the new lands in which they would ultimately settle. Now that the DP camps are being emptied by emigration the bulk of which is directed to Israel, the ORT is transferring whole carloads of machinery from those camps to Israel. The machines will be used to equip schools for artisans. ORT has shipped from Geneva to Tel Aviv complete installations for schools to train typewriter repair workers and wireless operators; also 353 sewing machines.

"WELL . . . WHAT DOES ZIONism mean to the American Jew now?" So runs the title of a new and sprightly leaflet issued by the Zionist Organization of America.

Its answer to the question is significant for its emphatic affirmation of the worthwhileness of Jewish life, not only in Israel but in America also. Such passages as the following strike a new note in the literature of ZOA propaganda:

"Now that I stop to think about it, Zionism means something to me, personally—faith in the Jewish future. It's worth everything in the world to hand on to my kids something more than the *pain* of being Jewish. They're learning the meaning of their Jewishness — with pride and without confusion. . . .

"There's something else, too, about faith in the Jewish future — it seems emptier without the warmth of the synagogue. I'm not the sort of man you would call deeply religious, but the *Kiddush* on Friday nights and the familiar candles seem to transform our home. *Shabbos* does have a meaning which is hard to explain."

▼

IMPRESSIVE CEREMONIES which were broadcast over a coast to coast network marked the dedication of the main building of the University of Judaism, the West Coast branch of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Dr. Louis Finkelstein, President of the Seminary, spoke at the dedicatory dinner. Others who participated were Dore Schary, motion picture producer, who is chairman of the University Board of Overseers, Eddie Cantor, and Charles Brown, president of the Los Angeles Jewish Community.

The building is a fifteen room converted structure and includes a library, museum, teachers institute, post-graduate school for rabbis and teachers and an extension department. One hundred full-time and five hundred part-time students attend the courses of the university.

The growing interest of American Jewry in perpetuating Judaism in America precisely at a time when it is exerting unprecedented efforts to insure a future for the Jewish people through the state of Israel confirms the faith of those Zionists who have maintained that the success of Zionism will involve not the disappearance of Judaism in the diaspora but its strengthening.

▼

A RECENT SUNDAY EDITION OF the New York *Times,* in its column "Art in Review" by Carlyle Burrows, discusses the program of the Liturgical Arts Society, Inc. of New York. The program is designed "for the improvement of religious sculpture suitable for church use." Maurice Lavanoux, the secretary of the society is a well known advocate of liberalism in liturgic art.

"The society," he says, "is averse to the standardization which has become commonplace in the field of commercial religious art, and properly wishes to bring about a wider utilization of revitalized art forms of beauty and appropriateness."

We believe that Mr. Lavanoux's critique of commercial religious art applies to Jewish art even more than to Christian. One grows a little weary at times with the ubiquitous *magen David* design, or the conventional menorah, the tablets of the law, and the *keter torah* supported by the lions of Judah. In Israel they have developed a few fresh motifs, although even there the Tomb of Rachel, the Tower of David and the so-called Wailing Wall still dominate the decoration of most souvenirs. Perhaps we need a Jewish Liturgical Arts Society.

Experimenting with a Pioneer Synagogue

By SAMUEL PENNER

HOW justified is the pessimism currently manifest among Jewish thinkers on the question of Jewish culture in America? Is it really so sterile?

The chorus of mourners would do well to consult Jewish history and tradition. Tradition forbids the recitation of *Kaddish* before the deceased is interred; history is rich in instances of diaspora communities' bringing in a good cultural crop from seemingly hopeless soil. Only a hundred years ago Judah Leib Gordon, poet laureate of the Russian Haskalah, cried aloud in despairing tones: *"Lemi ani amel?"* (For whom do I toil?). The enlightened youth, dazzled by sudden exposure to the new learning, were deserting *en masse* to Russian and German literature, and Gordon entertained little hope for continued Hebrew productivity in their hands. But Gordon proved a far better poet than prophet. For the self-styled "last of Zion's bards" was not yet a very old man when his much-lamented, lost generation had already produced whole galaxies of distinguished Hebrew writers, when three Hebrew dailies and numerous Hebrew periodicals and volumes were finding a lively market among increasing numbers of enthusiastic readers.

Faith the Decisive Factor in Establishing Jewish Civilization

True, we are in need of objective inquiries into all organized forms of the community's life and the possibilities they offer for cultural enterprise. Yet even such scientific surveys of Jewish organizational living will not resolve the issue. *For ultimately the realization of a spiritual rebirth for American Jews will be determined not so much by facts, as by faith—not by realists, but by inspired men.*

The momentous spiritual revolution of Hasidism for example cannot be understood without the creative labors of the Besht (Israel Baal Shem, founder of Hasidism) and his disciples, no matter how effectively one may account for the underlying economic and political conditions affecting Polish and south-Russian Jewry prior to the eighteenth century. Can you explain in strictly objective terms the recent spiritual achievement in which the old *Leshon Ha-kodesh,* the sacred tongue of scholars and literati, was revived overnight to communicate the precise speech and sophisticated thought of a twentieth century Yishuv? That achievement, let it be remembred, is but one phase of the most impressive manifestation of Jewish vitality in the past two millenia, that dynamic upsurge of the creative will to live—the birth of the third Jewish commonwealth of Israel.

How can such enthusiastic, selfless devotion be activated by American Jews on behalf of a creative Judaism? I am using the term "Judaism" in the sense of Professor M. M. Kaplan's felicitous definition to denote the religious civilization of the Jews. Our question then, practically understood, really consists of two questions, one having to do with source, the other, with method. The former might be phrased thus: where is the living agency which, in theory at least, is most favorable to a recreative development? The latter asks: how can this source be most effectively utilized to achieve the rebirth?

The Synagogue as the Spiritual Reservoir of American Judaism

The institutional organ in Jewish life which is best suited by constitutional nature and historical function to serve as the spiritual reservoir of an American Judaism reborn is the synagogue. I do not mean the American synagogue that we know today. For our synagogues, it hurts to admit, can, by and large, lay no greater claim to spiritual fruitfulness than any other Jewish institution on the American scene. The synagogue can be indicted for its cultural failure; the other organized agencies cannot. Almost without exception, they have conceived of Jewish culture as at best a desirable luxury, at worst a boring nuisance. From the smallest to the most powerful national bodies, success is measured predominantly in affairs of the Jews and for the Jews. Judaism is not basically their charge and therefore the crisis in American Judaism, although affecting them, cannot justly be placed at their doorstep. After all, they were established to meet other needs.

Moreover, all our Jewish agencies have perfected, with varying degrees of success, the typically American talent for specialization. Defense, overseas relief, fraternity, home philanthropy, social welfare, recreation, inter-group relations, Zionism and even religion have been approached in compartmental fashion and these, in turn, have been further broken down into minutest subdivisions, each eliciting highly specialized effort. They lack the total perspective, so essential to a flourishing culture. The synagogue, throughout its long and fruitful history, did preserve that generic approach to Judaism, constituting itself the living symbol of "catholic Israel."

In fact, the synagogue, historically speaking, constitutes the response of our ancestors some 2,500 years ago to the first total crisis of Judaism in the diaspora—the Babylonian Exile. Since then the record of the synagogue has justified the conclusion of the renowned British scholar, R. T. Herford, that "in all their long history, the Jewish people have done scarcely anything more wonderful than to create the synagogue."

What was the synagogue's secret of success as a social instrument for creative survival? A comprehensive answer would merit a volume by itself. We can here briefly sketch two cogent factors, one relating to its constitutional make-up and the other to its historical function.

The Functions of the Synagogue

A fruitful approach to the inner design of the synagogue is the semantic one. In Hebrew the synagogue is known by three names, each of which provides an important clue to its vitality: *Bet Hatefillah*—House of Worship; *Bet Hamidrash*—House of Study, and *Bet Hakeneset*—House of Assembly. These three names suggest the three over-all areas of Jewish life, which the synagogue was fashioned to serve—those of our religion, our culture and our peoplehood. Kaplan is profoundly right in insisting that these three dimensions of Judaism are inseparable. The synagogue, by its very constitution furnishes the most convincing evidence.

Functionally, the synagogue of the diaspora became the seat of the Jewish community. There all Jews met to articulate in prayer their highest ideals and fondest dreams. Within its walls youth and adult studied and lived the Torah culture. It was the scene of all communal gathering in days of disaster or of joy. Jewish law courts sent forth life-regulating decisions from its doors. Associations sprang from it—organizations to aid women in childbirth, to admit babies into the Covenant of Abraham, to dower

needy brides, to ransom captives, to sustain the poor, to comfort the prisoner, to visit the sick, to bury the dead, to solace the mourner. The famous Talmudic master, Resh Lakish, summed it up well in this pithy phrase: "He who has a synagogue in his community and does not frequent it, is considered a bad neighbor."

Why then has the American synagogue fallen so short of the mark? What are the symptoms of its malaise? Can its present trend be reversed? How? These are questions most germane to our discussion, for we advance the thesis that the synagogue is an indispensable source for motivating the will to creative Judaism.

The philosophical problem of the synagogue in adapting itself to the modern scientific outlook cannot here be resolved with any degree of adequacy. However, the problem is not incapable of solution. Christian scholars have long been engaged in noteworthy efforts at seeking an adjustment, and Kaplan, in his recently published *The Future of the American Jew,* has made a significant Jewish contribution in this field; there will doubtless be others. Nevertheless, it should be said that philosophical adjustments, no matter how successful, cannot absolve us of the crying need to find practical answers to living problems. The will to live creates a philosophy. The converse does not always hold true.

The Defects of the Modern Synagogue

Judged by their practical achievements, our synagogues are missing on all cylinders. Our *Bate Tefillah* have become, for the most part, lecture or concert halls, and prayer is almost a lost art. Our *Bate Midrashot* are waging a valiant struggle for higher standards in youth and adult education, but their attainments are uninspiring. Creative achievements in Jewish religion, literature, music, art and ethics, are rarely among their products. As for our *Bate Kenesiot,* a host of secular or communal agencies have taken over much of the work, and what remains of it in the programs of our congregations, with their men's clubs, sisterhoods and youth organizations, is hardly richer in Jewish content than what is to be found in theirs.

Most painful of all is the lack of a spirited sense of challenge and personal consecration in our syngagogues. The incentive of group survival suffices at present to erect lofty structures, to add names to membership lists and to raise budgets. No doubt these matters are important, but they are, after all, purely material achievements in which the synagogue enjoys no greater success than dozens of other Jewish associations. They are certainly not calculated to attract the idealistic, the spiritually sensitive, the intellectually or aesthetically productive among our people, and they seldom do. How long then can our drained human resources go unreplenished?

In its present state the synagogue admittedly cannot answer the need. Why should we not, therefore, experiment with our synagogues to render them more effective? If the synagogue is really possessed of dynamic, life-generating power, is it not conceivable that our lack of experimental courage and imagination has been the primary obstacle to the tapping of that power? Ours will not be the first generation to conduct practical experiments with the synagogue. The synagogue has always adapted itself creatively to new needs of the environment. Why not now in America? For American Jews to ignore the creative possibilities of the synagogue is to regard 2,500 years of Jewish experience as irrelevant and, at the same time, to forfeit one of the most characteristic of American traits, the love of experimentation. Strange it is that we, who have

encouraged experiments in every phase of Jewish life (education, summer camping, fund-raising, defense, etc.), content ourselves with an inadequate *status quo* in our synagogues.

Wanted—a Pioneer Synagogue

Realistically conceived, an experimental synagogue must reckon with the fact that to toil for a creative Judaism in American requires the enormous self-sacrifice of pioneers. It will entail no less of devotion, enthusiasm and practical planning than was demanded of the *halutzim* in the reconstruction of Eretz Yisrael. Assuredly Jews can be found who are so profoundly disturbed by the increasing demoralization of Judaism in this country, that they will answer the call to strenuous pioneer work, but they will not be found in large numbers. Nor is that unusual. Pioneering never appeals to vast numbers. What is of decisive import is that the *Biluim* of the American Jewish renascence should not be overwhelmed and frustrated through individual, haphazard striving within the framework of existing agencies, which are inimical or, at best, neutral to creative survival.

I therefore propose the founding of a Pioneer Synagogue, whose avowed purpose it shall be to devote itself unstintingly to the pursuit of a creative Jewish life for its pioneer associates and their families.

Of course, the success of this experimental synagogue will largely be determined by the caliber of pioneer associates who will be drawn to it, the selection of human material being of paramount significance. In this regard the recent experience of the Eretz Yisrael rebirth need not be wasted. Dr. Arthur Ruppin, the foremost social engineer of the Yishuv, in a paper, "The Selection of the Fittest," published in *Der Yude,* 1919, had this to say about the men and women of the First Aliyah: ". . . in the Yishuv there was a process of automatic sifting at work, which rejected the bad elements. . . . Those emigrants whose aim it was to make money in a short time either did not go to Palestine at all, or having tried it, left it soon. In the main, only those remained who had some understanding of and love for the idealistic elements connected with Palestine as a land for Jewish settlement. To this should be added the fact that Palestine was also a land unsuited for easy and comfortable living. Living in Palestine meant a kind of renunciation which could be practised for any length of time only by those who did not consider material pleasures and worldly amusements the aim and object of life."

A selective process will operate for all would-be *haver* associates in the Pioneer Synagogue. It will not be an easy life the pioneer *haver* chooses. His responsibilities will be fully formulated in the synagogue's constitution and will demand a life-time effort from him and his family. The synagogue will establish its standards as clear requisites of membership and will devise the proper techniques for their implementation. One of these might well take the form of a required preparatory and training period (*hakhsharah*) of at least six months duration before voting a candidate into full *haver* status. Such processing and training of Pioneer Synagogue members is no less important for our enterprise than it was and is for the *halutz* colony in the Holy Land.

The Need of Standards

Parenthetically, all our synagogues had better begin thinking in these two basic terms: definition of standards, no matter

how minimally conceived and their effectuation by the membership. It is no secret that many of our synagogues approach the matter of recruiting members with even less ethical sensitivity than do the numerous fraternal orders. The latter require at least a token affirmation of their objectives and observe some formal period of initiation before voting to accept a new member. Not so with many of our congregations. They will take anybody, sight unseen, so long as his dues are forwarded. His views, his character, his conduct, his values, all the really important things about him, seldom receive any attention at all. A mad worship of numbers characterizes most congregations. No synagogue is considered successful if it does not attract a large membership.

That such naiveté is usually passed off as businesslike is almost incredible. The harassed synagogue treasurer sighs, "How can a budget be raised on loyalties and ideals?" The answer is that it can be raised on nothing else — that only for lack of them has it become necessary to appeal to baser, high-pressure methods, to card games, spring dances, bingo parties, entertainment extravaganzas, cheap ad journals and to all the accepted fund-raising media. We must outgrow the "come one, come all" mentality of membership campaigns. Let all our synagogues lay down concrete criteria for affiliation and see to it that they are not taken lightly.

The Pioneer Synagogue as Bet Hatefillah

The Pioneer Synagogue will be distinguished from others primarily in this: that its standards for *haver* association will be so very high and comprehensive as to elicit the greatest possible stimulus to creative Jewish living. Its *Bet Ha-tefillah* will adopt binding agreements embracing areas of worship—attendance at worship, mastery of traditional liturgy and development of new liturgy, liturgical music, home worship, religious ritual and values. It would be an unwarranted presumption to predetermine all minutiae here. Detailed standards will undoubtedly crystallize out of the collective religious experience of the group. The prime requisites for this development are that it be grounded in knowledge not ignorance, that it be fashioned to serve God, humanity and Israel, not the vulgar interest in mere convenience. Thus the *Bet Ha-tefillah* will become organically interconnected with the *Bet Ha-midrash* and *Bet Ha-keneset*—that is to say, that the *haver's* religious idealism will not be divorced from his cultural and communal interests.

The Pioneer Synagogue as Bet-Hamidrash

The Pioneer Synagogue will restore the *Bet Ha-midrash* to its former preeminence. A cradle-to-grave program of maximum educational and cultural experience will be normalized for every *haver* family from nursery school through elementary, secondary and adult schools for higher learning. Adopting the well-known dictum of Shammai, *"Aseh toratkha keva"* (Set aside an appointed time for study), *haverim* will bind themselves to the total plan of their *Bet Ha-midrash* as a fixed requisite for affiliation in this Pioneer Synagogue. The general objective of this life-long system of Jewish education will be to equip the associate for a full and creative participation in American Jewish life. This involves an at-homeness in all of Hebrew literature, Biblical, mediaeval and modern, Yiddish and English Jewish literature, Jewish history, religious tradition, folklore, ethics, Jewish music and the arts, an appreciation of Eretz Yisrael, a knowledge of the American Jewish community, of American his-

tory, literature and art, an understanding of democracy, of the American community and of the world-wide community of men. Only a life-time devotion to learning will be adequate to the Pioneer *Bet Ha-midrash* in its total war against the ignorance of Jews on Judaism.

The Pioneer Synagogue as Bet-keneset

The *Bet Ha-keneset* of the Pioneer Synagogue will constitute a democratic association of all *haverim* to administer their affairs, to provide for their social and recreational interests and to relate their work to all positive and progressive movements in the Jewish and general community. The social and recreational interests of the Pioneer Synagogue will not differ radically from those of other *Bate Kenesiot,* except in the extensive planning of committees and in the greater participation of membership. However, it is in the sphere of the Jewish and general community that the Pioneer *Bet Ha-keneset* will really pioneer. How many synagogues ever speak their congregational minds on the burning issues of Jewish life—on Zionism, defense, assimilation, Jewish culture, Jewish home life and others? Can it be that the synagogue has nothing to say about Jewish problems? And what of the great social questions facing America and the world, matters of the highest ethical consequences, civil rights, property rights, human rights, nationalism, world peace, democracy? Can the synagogue remain inarticulate and avoid becoming irrelevant? The *haverim* of the Pioneer Synagogue will form themselves into commissions to investigate all problems relevant to the well-being of Jews and non-Jews alike and to determine what position, if any, Judaism has taken historically in the matter. These commissions will then report back to the group for thorough discussion, after which a commitment to principle and to cooperation with appropriate communal agencies will be made.

What of our youth? There is no synagogue in America that is not frankly worried about them. Yet all our worrying will avail us nothing if we do not call a halt to the illusion that it is possible to nurture a wholesome youth movement in the present wilderness of adult indifference. "The beginning of wisdom" here is the honest recognition that the standards set by the practice of the adult synagogue, not its professed ones, provide the motivation for its youth. For the youth of the Pioneer synagogue there will be a gradated progression of growth into adult *haver* status covering the three areas of synagogue life—worship, study and communal endeavor. Above all, Pioneer youth will be fired by the challenge of pioneering. Their synagogue will not be a mere bastion for survival, but a pioneer frontier for creative living.

Obviously a whole corps of gifted and devoted professionals — teachers, musicians, artists, psychologists and administrators—will be required. Such talent and loyalty will not be attracted by the unwholesome labor-management relationship in most of our synagogues, a system which has long been in need of thorough overhauling. I refer to the stupid practice of engaging trained professionals, but denying them a voice in authoritative policy-making, a privilege reserved exclusively for paying members, no matter how ignorant. The Pioneer Synagogue will learn from the experience of the *halutz* community which supports its skilled personnel, so that their full talents may be placed at the service of the group. In this spirit the Pioneer Synagogue will not hire professional labor; it will invite professionals to become *haver* associates

and provide for their economic security in salary and tenure in exchange for the privilege of their full-time services.

The Pioneer Synagogue and Jewish Denominationalism

Will the Pioneer Synagogue be Orthodox, Conservative or Reform? Many "realists" among us will argue the indispensability of each denomination. Nevertheless, what Dr. Solomon Schechter once said of the Jewish Theological Seminary is worth repeating here: "I am thoroughly convinced that if the Seminary is to become a real blessing, it must not be degraded as a battle-ground for parties." One need not belabor the point that all American synagogues, no matter what their adjective label, stand today in great want of creative vitality. Perhaps the time has come to experiment with an adjectiveless Pioneer Synagogue in America. Certainly all the national synagogue bodies should begin thinking in this direction.

To those who argue that a creative Judaism is the business of the whole Jewish community, not only of the synagogue —even of a Pioneer Synagogue—I respond, Amen. I am already convinced. But who will convince the Jewish community, or, for the sake of accuracy, the mass of Jewish organizations which act in lieu of a community? Frankly, a mature community of American Jews is, as yet, a Messianic dream. The profoundest need of the hour is for American *Biluim,* pioneers for Judaism in this land, to work within an American situation offering maximum Jewish experience. The experimental Pioneer synagogue is designed to offer such a situation. It will not—indeed it cannot—displace the community or any of its agencies. But it can become a decisive force for the maturation of the community.

The Prospects of the Pioneer Synagogue

Is the time ripe for such a movement? Will American Jews marshal vision and courage commensurate to the challenge? This faintest outline of the Pioneer Synagogue is advanced as a feeler, a trial balloon to record the community's response. From every quarter, at conventions of all our major national bodies, the main questions of our collective Jewish life are being raised: Will the largest community of Jews in the 20th century leave more than a philanthropic footnote upon the leaves of Jewish history? As the state of Israel rises, must the state of American Judaism correspondingly decline? The final answer to that question will be determined by the extent of our faith in Judaism, as a source of personal self-fulfillment for Jews and of spiritual enrichment for all men.

Where can that faith more sublimely be perceived than in the synagogue, "with its long continuous cry after God for more than twenty-three centuries, with its unremittent activity in teaching and developing the word of God, with its uninterrupted succession of Prophets, Psalmists, Scribes, Assideans, Rabbis, Patriarchs, Interpreters, Elucidators, Eminences and Teachers, with its glorious record of saints, martyrs, sages, philosophers, scholars and mystics"; this synagogue, the only true witness to the past, and our most dependable stake in the future?

I believe that enough Pioneer *haverim* are available to establish a Pioneer synagogue in every metropolitan center in the United States. They will come from all walks of Jewish life, religious, secular, Zionist, Hebraist, Yiddishist, labor, fraternal, defense, welfare—and the longing for a creative, intelligent, living Judaism in America will unite them. Like their prototypes in the Land of Israel, they will be fired by the knowledge that the

coming centuries of American Judaism are in their hands. Their cooperative striving, compounded of honest idealism and intensive labor, will drain the swamp lands of Jewish ignorance, irrigate our vast cultural deserts and build a new spiritual garden out of the neglected soil of American Jewish experience.

The Yivo on the Jewish Scene

By SHLOMO NOBLE

The Annual Conference of the Yiddish Scientific Institute—Yivo, scheduled for January 15-19 calls public attention to that unique institution. Important as it is to resurrect the life of past eras in the history of our people, it is certainly no less important to collect and record the data on Jewish creative activity in our day and to cast light on the conditions of Jewish life with which all efforts at preserving and developing it must reckon. That is the task that Yivo has undertaken and therefore we believe that our readers will be interested in this account of the history and achievements of Yivo. —*Editors.*

WHEN a small group of Jewish scholars and communal leaders met in 1925 to lay the foundations of the Yiddish Scientific Institute —Yivo, they formulated its aims thus: The institution would be a modern center of Jewish research in Eastern Europe and a meeting place for the Jewish scholar.

What was new in the program of the Yivo? There were at that time several higher institutions of Jewish learning in existence, but these were in Western and Central Europe and were oriented toward the outlook of the community about them. The Yeshivot in Eastern Europe, which served admirably generations of Jews, were no longer fully adequate to the exigencies of the time. The post-war world raised a host of problems; minorities, cultural automony, and a score of others. Above all, the process of secularization set in also in Eastern Europe and was proceeding at a rapid pace. What was needed, therefore, was an institution that would combine the spirit of the old Yeshivah, the selfless devotion to learning, with the newer approach and methods, that would vitalize the old concept of Torah with the techniques of modern science. The approach to learning was new in Jewish life and the Yivo had to find the means both to gather the straw, as it were, and to make the bricks.

As its first step, the Yivo launched a campaign of gathering the raw materials, the basic data on given aspects of Jewish life. The Yivo sent out field workers who were furnished with complete instructions and some preliminary training, to make a study of Jewish customs and practices, Jewish ways of life. The materials thus gathered formed the nucleus of the museum and the folklore and ethnography collections. A good deal of the material was incorporated, after proper analysis and evaluation, in the publications of the Yivo, the three volumes of *Studies in History,* the three volumes of *Studies in Economics and Statistics,* the three volumes of *Studies in Linguistics,* the two volumes of *Studies in Psychology and Education,* and the bimonthly *Yivo Bleter.* The total of this output in 1939 reached to 30,000 pages. The collections in the museum boasted of 100,000 units and the library contained 40,000 books and 10,000 volumes of periodicals.

A New Conception of Culture

Important as these achievements were, the significance of Yivo activities lay in another direction. The Yivo succeeded in

a measure in making the Jewish community in Eastern Europe Jewish culture conscious. The Jewish tradesman, the artisan, and the man in the street began, thanks to the efforts of the Yivo, to appreciate, as forms of culture, an old saying, a fragment of song, a family record penned on the fly-leaf of a *Siddur*. Customs, practices, patterns of speech, even manner of dress assumed a new significance. The past became meaningful and vital in terms of the present. The Jewish man began to see his life, his daily activities in a new perspective; he gained a new conception of culture and life and the interrelation of the two.

Curious and heart-warming is a Yivo correspondent's account of the refined technique he had evolved for obtaining old and rare books and other materials for the Yivo. The Job-like patience, the statesman-like tact, the subtle resourcefulness reflected in his account bespeak an unlimited devotion to the cause of the Yivo. The same sentiments abound in the letters accompanying the modest contributions sent to the Yivo by poor Jews in remote townships and villages throughout Eastern Europe.

To Learn and to Teach

It was this enthusiasm and love on the part of the people that enabled the Yivo to set out toward its objective. The publications, the library, the museum were eloquent testimony to what even an impoverished community could acccomplish when fired by an ideal. But the Yivo regarded learning in the traditional Jewish manner, *lilmod ulelammed* — to learn and to teach. It was, therefore, not content with its accomplishments and was aiming higher. The Yivo began to make plans for a higher school of Jewish social science. The acquisition of a suitable building in 1930 made it possible for the Yivo a few years later to open the school.

The *Aspirantur,* as the new addition came to be called, was far more than a school. It was a rallying point, a new hope for the Jewish youth of Eastern Europe. An untutored lad in a small Galician town was given training and guidance in the study of Jewish folklore and, within the space of a few years, he made several important contributions to that field. Had the hand of Esau spared him, he would have risen to prominence in Jewish scholarship. Two *aspirants* turned to the study of Jewish agriculture in a district of Poland and Jewish occupations in Warsaw, respectively. In time, they came to occupy a prominent place among the studendts of Jewish economy in Poland. Similar instances could be cited for the other fields of study.

The New Center

By 1939 the work of the Yivo had expanded in many directions. To the *Aspirantur* was added a *Proaspirantur.* The fourteen years of spade work were bearing fruit. Then came the war. The decentralized organizational structure of the institution, with research sections in Vilna, Paris, and New York, now served it in good stead. The entire institution, or rather what was rescued of it, was transferred to New York, the central seat of the Yivo at present.

The new home confronted the Yivo with gigantic problems. Although not entirely new to America, the Yivo had to find and cultivate a new audience. Moreover, the American Jewish community made certain demands upon the Yivo. It had problems that the Yivo could best aid in solving, it had questions that the Yivo was most qualified to answer. The foundations of the Jewish economy in America were laid by a generation that had its roots in Eastern Europe and were inspired by its ideals. What agency was there on the American scene more fit

than the Yivo to examine the contribution of this immigrant generation to the Jewish economy here in particular and to the development of industry in the land in general?

The Yivo accepted the challenge. In 1943-45 the Yivo published the first two volumes of the *History of the Jewish Movement in the United States,* under the editorship of the late E. Tcherikower, research secretary of the Section of History, Yivo. While fully elucidating the economic aspects of the movement, the work does not fail to record the idealism animating it—the striving for a more equitable and just society, for a greater dignity of man. To be sure, the Jewish immigrant fought to improve his material condition; he fought against sweatshops and other exploitative practices; but he also sought a better education, the refinements of the arts, the worthwhile and creative use of leisure. In 1945, the Yivo published the *Classification of Jewish Immigrants and Its Implications: A Survey of Opinion,* which indirectly helped to define the position of the Jew in America from the viewpoint of the social scientist. In the *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* (Vols. I, II-III) a number of aspects of Jewish life in America are examined: the psychology of the Jewish child in America, the attitude of Jewish collegians toward their people and its problems, and kindred topics.

A New Approach

In its search for new and authentic sources of knowledge, the Yivo takes advantage of its proximity to the grass roots of the people and makes liberal use of questionnaires, autobiographies, letters, and the like. In 1942 the Yivo sponsored an autobiography contest for immigrants on the subject, "Why I Left the Old World and What I Have Accomplished in America." The contest brought in 250 entries, comprising some 25,000 pages. The results were embodied in a study by Moses Kligsberg, published in the *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science.* (The study was used in several colleges in courses in social psychology.) Similarly, in 1945-6 the Yivo conducted a contest for soldiers and veterans on the subject, "My Experiences and Observations as a Jew in World War II." The rich material resulting from this contest is now being analyzed and evaluated.

The Yivo is fully in accord with the ancient maxim, "Better is what one seeth with the eyes than the wanderings of the desire," and attempts to translate it into practice. To that purpose the Yivo frequently arranges exhibitions. Notable among these were the "M. L. Lilienblum Exhibition," "Jews in Europe, 1939-1946," "Jewish Children in Europe After the War," and "Jewish Life in Shanghai." These exhibitions, the aim of which is to concretize select aspects of Jewish life and experience, have met with a warm reception, both on the part of the public and of the press.

Raising Disciples

In America, as in Europe, the Yivo is vitally concerned with raising a new generation of scholars. Intensive courses in Jewish literature and Jewish thought are offered to select groups of students. Largely through the efforts of the Yivo, a New York institution of higher learning introduced Yiddish into its curriculum and a number of collegiate institutions offer Yiddish courses in their extension division. In the past summer, a West Coast university offered courses in Yiddish language and linguistics and in Jewish folklore. In November, 1947, the College Yiddish Association, consisting of instructors of Yiddish in the colleges, was organized in New York. Its aims, among others, are to spread interest in Yid-

dish among wider academic circles and to conduct general cultural activities among the students of Yiddish. The association arranged Purim and Lag ba-Omer parties for the students, which proved to be highly successful. The above activities are by no means intended as a substitute for the long-cherished aspiration of the Institute—the Yivo Graduate School of Jewish Social Science. The Yivo is now seeking means for the realization of this enterprise.

The World Over

It might seem from the above that the Yivo is now concentrating exclusively on the American scene. This is by no means the case. Jewish communities in other lands come in for full consideration. Thus the Yivo has raised a monument to the largest Jewish community in Europe in the two volumes of Jacob Shatzky's *History of the Jews in Warsaw.* Two numbers of the *Yivo Bleter* were dedicated to the recent catastrophe of the Jews in Europe. The Yivo is making strenuous efforts to preserve some of the monuments of Eastern European Jewish life, particularly of its last phases. It has today one of the largest collections of materials on the history of the Jews in Europe in recent years. Nor are other communities neglected. Studies were devoted to the Jewish communities in Cuba, Mexico, and Iraq. The State of Israel has come in for special consideration. The *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* (Vol. II-III) features a study on the first attempts to organize an artisan organization in Palestine in the 1870's. Other Yivo publications include studies on Jewish education in Palestine, on the political history of Palestine, on the psychological problems of the *kevutzah,* and the third volume of the *Studies in Psychology and Education,* now on the press, contains two articles on various aspects of the psychology of adolescents in Israel. In the program of the twenty-third annual conference, which is set for the 15th through the 19th of this month, the State of Israel occupies a prominent place.

Aims and Achievements

After a period of twenty-three years of Yivo existence, we may ask: To what extent has the institution realized the aims it had set for itself at the time of establishment? Let others jduge. A prominent Jewish educator and scholar writes: "It is difficult to imagine how much faith and inspiration the Yivo conference has breathed into me." Testimony of another kind to the appreciation of the Yivo's achievements is found in the following: In January, 1945, as the last survivors in the death camp at Auschwitz were being rapidly liquidated, several of them resolved to leave a record of their final agonies to posterity, in the form of a Yiddish publication. In the introduction to the publication, the enterprise is thus motivated: "Let there remain a few leaves for the Yivo archives, repository of Jewish suffering. . . ."

The Yivo is thoroughly aware of the fact that the road ahead is long and full of difficulties. But the first steps have been taken, and, as the Yivo believes, in the right direction.

Karl Wolfskehl's "Last Word"

By BERTHA BADT-STRAUSS

THREE great *"baale-teshuvah"* were born to the doomed generations of German Jewry shortly before it was struck by disaster. The first was old Hermann Cohen, the philosopher of German Judaism, who had called himself "a *baal-teshuvah* for more than thirty years"; that is what he confessed when talking to his sensitive friend Boris Pines. The second was young Franz Rosenzweig, who will always remain young in our hearts, since he passed away, before reaching his fiftieth year, after heroically battling for seven years against mortal illness. Rosenzweig had come from the extreme left of German Jewry . . . and had grown to be one of the last philosophers of traditional Judaism. The third *baal-teshuvah* left us some months ago, dying a lonely exile in far-away New Zealand, in his eightieth year, "full of days." He was Karl Wolfskehl, who began as a brilliant Germanic poet and scholar, a friend and helper of Stefan George, the master-poet of the German young generation. He died as a great *Jewish* poet, who had kept alive the Judaism of a whole generation of young Jews in the turmoil of the Hitler years.

Never shall I forget the time when I first met Karl Wolfskehl in my student days in old Munich. Every student used to know him, the handsome bearded man whom you met everywhere, both in the bookshops and libraries and at the carnival dances and frolics. His sound scholarship had discovered in Bachofen the mystical philosopher of the new school of thought. Moreover, Wolfskehl had edited some of the oldest German poetry and his book on Goethe had rediscovered for the Germans their greatest poet.

Karl Wolfskehl stemmed from one of the oldest families of German Jews, the Kalonymos family, and was always proud of the tradition that Charlemagne himself brought the family from Lucca to Mayence, where they flourished for three centuries until they were all but wiped out in the massacre of the Jews in 1096. But all this belonged to the past; and today the late offspring of this proud family seemed willing to dedicate his whole being to German poetry and scholarship. It is true, Karl Wolfskehl never quite forgot the rock from which he was hewn. He was an early Zionist and a contributor to the famed Bar Kochba yearbook, where many names of writers of the Jewish renascence appear for the first time.

There still remain some unanswered questions for the Wolkskehl biographer. Thus it seems a psychological miracle, comparable only to the awakening of the Biblical prophets to their calling, that this man, no longer young, was destined by fate to be the poet who would forge the weapons for Jewish youth in the dire year of 1933. It was then that this man of the graying temples, the eternal discoverer of old-new values, discovered the secret meaning of Israel's fate: to go on. . . .

Abraham went, Jacob went
They all had to go . . .
All of them went, staff in the road-hard hand
Promise in their hearts, eyes filled with Him . . .
Turned to the one and only goal. . . .

It was then that his unforgettable Seder Songs were created, songs which have seen many a Seder Night in this country, in Israel and in every other country in the world where refugees assemble.

All this we knew. What we also knew, but did not grasp as we should have was this: that these songs—*The Voice Speaks* they were called—signified the beginning of a new life and a new Jewish art for their creator. They were conceived in 1933 and printed in 1934. From then on to his dying day Karl Wolfskehl never tired of adding to them, deepening their meaning and their message. In the years of his exile in Italy, he seems to have studied mediaeval Jewish religious philosophers. With the help of his friend Friedrich Bargebuhr, who subsequently translated Karl Wolfskehl's *The Voice Speaks* into a crisp, living Hebrew, he translated at this time Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut* (The Royal Crown). *The Voice Speaks,* which had been published twice in the series of the Schocken books, was published in 1935 in an enlarged edition, containing about ten more poems. The bilingual edition of Wolfskehl's poems, published in 1947 in New York, brought four new poems and significant alterations and additions in the text of the older poems. The lonely poet himself wondered at this "late harvest"; it seemed a symbol of his indomitable youth.

In those years we might have perceived that here we had one of the very few genuine religious poets of our time: a modern *paytan* whose *piyutim* ought to be pondered and "learned" like the thoughtful *piyutim* of Eleasar Kalir and Meir Rotenburg. It was his *Yom Kippur Message* which grew most of all; sometimes a new stanza was born which astonished and even startled its own author, as Wolfskehl's letters tell us.

In his last years of exile and sickness, Karl Wolfskehl's unfailing hand tried to sum up the results of his life. Some time ago, a Swiss publishing house—Orego Verlag—published his "Epistle to the Germans": a proud and sad farewell to his former friends and countrymen. It revealed to the "raging Teuton" where the two paths separated — never to meet again. It also revealed the author's undying love for the German language and poetry, but it would seem as though Wolfskehl now heeded his own warning:

No love for pasts. . .
Reject return . . .
To go . . . what pain!
To go . . . what joy!
Do not remain!

For now Wolfskehl returned in every sense of the word to the way of his ancestors: another of those *baale-teshuvah* who have appeared among European Jews of his generation. Like many a fellow sufferer among his Jewish brethren, he turned to the Book of Job for symbols of Jewish fate and Jewish character.

In 1947 he sent me the following letter: "My strength is ebbing away. I shall not be among you—or rather, far from you—for long. So, I send you what is in every respect my 'last word,' (I consider it also my most important word), the 'Job.' . . . The various Cantos grew into their present form through the years. . . . This poem is sent to you as my chief testament. I feel satisfied now that these copies are in the hands of my friends. I ask you and my other friends to see to its publication. . . ."

Here they are on my desk, these gigantic, visionary poems, depicting fate and metamorphosis of the Wandering Jew. It would seem to me that each one of us who was fortunate enough to be a contemporary of Karl Wolfskehl is in duty-bound to make these poems, his "last word," available to a larger public. Only then our generation will understand that we were blessed to have in our midst a religious poet of the kind that our fathers saw in Judah Halevi or Ibn Gabirol. Karl Wolfskehl lived to see the decline and fall of German Jewry—but he also saw the dawn of a new age: the age of Israel.

Random Thoughts

What gives business men their headaches is that the winds of trade have nothing in them of the steadiness of trade-winds, but are more like the sudden gusts or hurricanes, defying all calculations.

* * *

Universalists believe that all human beings, regardless of creed or race, will be saved.

There is said to be one Universalist to every fifty or sixty thousand Christians.

That is about the extent of his chance to be saved, according to his fellow-Christians.

* * *

The monastery in the Middle Ages ministered less to the ascetic devotion to God than to the regressive tendency in those who were too weak to face up to the harsh realities of the world.

Unworldliness was the medieval way of saying: "To hell with the world."

Nowadays there are a few who say it by taking shelter in a Mother Church.

Most, however, take to drink or women.

* * *

The Reconstructionist movement is, in a sense, trying to act the analyst to us Jews, and to have us grow up and learn to let go of Mamma Tradition's apron strings, without rejecting Mamma altogether.

But, as in "Deep Analysis" by Charles Berg, which describes in detail a single case of "analysis" the patient, after having undergone treatment for several months, comes to the analyst complaining: "I am fed up with it. I am fed up with you."

Analyst: "Then why come?"

Patient: "Well, I am not quite sure that I am *really* well enough."

Analyst: "Are you fed up with what I am doing to you, or are you fed up with what I am not doing to you?"

Patient: "I am fed up with what you are not doing. I feel I ought to ask you what I should do during the day. I want a course of discipline."

Analyst: "So you are not quite well enough."

One who expects Reconstructionism to provide a new hour by hour *Shulhan Aruk* is "really not quite well enough."

* * *

John Foster Dulles recently had occasion to repeat the following stereotype: "Belief in the dignity and worth of the individual flows from the assumption that the individual is created by God in His image."

This is like saying that we dress well in order to look at a mirror.

The fact is just the other way.

The dignity and worth of the individual is a moral axiom or ultimate which religion expresses by saying, "God created man in His image."

* * *

When a water system is run for the benefit of politicans, it does not occur to us to deny the indispensability of water.

Yet when a religious organization is either corrupt or mismanaged, we conclude that we can get along without religion.

* * *

If it were not for business, democracies would have as little business to do business with Fascist Spain as with Communist Russia.

* * *

No amount of irrefutable evidence will convince those who do not trust their own minds.

M.M.K.

Correspondence

The All-Day Jewish School As a Solution of the Christmas Problem

Among the interesting reactions of our readers to the articles on the problem of Christmas in the public schools is that contained in the following letter. We felt that it was a challenge to the author of the article and we therefore submitted it to him for comments. We are happy to present both views to our readers.

—Editors.

Sirs:

The article "Christmas in the Public School —The Problem," appearing in the December 10th issue of your magazine confirms my belief that there is only one way in which Jewish parents can be reassured that their children's minds do not become infiltrated with Christian thoughts and symbols. That *one* way is by erecting an all-day Hebrew School in every Jewish community in the United States. In less than four years it has been evidenced that such a trend exists, by the fact that more than 50 such schools were established outside of New York City.

To many—and this includes Conservative-minded as well as Orthodox Jews—it is obvious that only in this way can we be certain that our Jewish children will not be singing Christmas carols or drawing Christmas trees every year at that time.

As for Hanukkah—these children will be taught the real meaning of Hanukkah by well-trained teachers who are not ashamed of the fact that they are Jewish, and by teachers who know the story of Hanukkah rather than that of the nativity.

The problem which the author has so brilliantly analyzed can only be solved with the establishment of Yeshivot—the one kind of school where such a problem can never arise.

SHIRLEY WEINSTEIN
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sirs:

Thanks for sending me the interesting letter of Shirley Weinstein called forth by my recent article. There are many reasons why all-day Jewish schools will *not* fully ease the situation. For one thing, most American Jewish parents will not want to send their children to a parochial school; many cannot afford it; many others think it means "segregation" which they view as "un-American." We surely cannot *force* such parents to send their children to Yeshivot. Accordingly, most Jewish children will go to public schools for a long time to come.

Secondly, all-day schools *might* help from the *Jewish* point of view, but what about the *Christian* side of the problem? I maintain that Christian celebrations in public school are just as wrong and unfair for *Christian* children as for Jewish. My own proposed solution, I think, is based on the idea that public school should serve to educate *all* children, from a *basic human* approach. As American citizens, as well as Jews, we are responsible for the improvement and adequacy of public school education. By withdrawing all our Jewish children from public school—impossible, but let's imagine it for the sake of argument—and leaving the public school for Christians only, we are betraying an *American* institution designed for the great democratic ideal of *public* education. A truly sound solution to the problem *must* provide for the educational needs of *all children;* and not as Jews or Christians or members of any other faith, but as *human beings.*

Thirdly, what makes you think Jewish all-day schools will not, in their own way, be just as narrow and sectarian as public schools are at present? Certainly, I want my child to have a strong Jewish education; but I also want him to have a *broad general* education. I should not be satisfied simply with having him celebrate Hanukkah; I want him to learn about Christmas, and Chinese New Years, and Mohammedan winter festivals, etc. As far as I know, Jewish parochial schools do a wonderful job on Hanukkah and other Jewish observances; some of the more progressive ones also celebrate American secular and patriotic holidays. But do any of them provide for a general, universal culture; for a knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of all the different kinds of people there are in this world of ours? There are a few progressive, private schools (Oak Lane Country Day School in Philadelphia, for example) which do provide these values. My point is that the public schools must follow suit.

ABRAHAM SEGAL

Takes Issue Both with Rabbi Kellner and The Reconstructionist

Sirs:

In a letter published in your issue of December 24th, Rabbi Abraham A. Kellner refers to my having pointed out in an article which appeared in *The Reconstructionist* that the rabbis of the Conservative group "are not *rabbanim* in the sense of religious authority."

The implication of this statement is not accurate. Obviously, the rabbis of the Conservative group, with a goodly number of exceptions, incidentally, do not have the *semikhah* or *hattarat hora'ah.* This, however, serves as the basis of authority for ritual decisions only in the field of *kashrut* and related areas, which

are treated in the *Yoreh Deah*. On all other aspects of Jewish law, the *semikhah* now in vogue confers no special authority. Even in the area of *kashrut*, steps are now being taken, welcome though belated, to remedy the situation for Conservative rabbis through the Seminary. In common with other colleagues, I have been urging this step for years.

If Rabbi Kellner wishes to imply that I concede that Conservative rabbis lack religious authority, he is entirely mistaken. Basically, the authority of the Conservative rabbis, like that of all rabbis, resides in the scholarship and character they possess and the position they occupy as the spiritual leaders of their people.

In spite of the impression prevalent in many quarters, and propagated even by scholars who should know better, the *semikhah* of the Orthodox rabbi today is a far cry from the traditional *semikhah* of the *Tannaim* of the *Mishnah*. Virtually all that is in common is the use of the same term, for the powers of the modern Orthodox rabbis, from their own standpoint, are considerably more circumscribed. In fact, the unsuccessful effort to revive *semikhah* by Jacob Berab in the sixteenth century is itself evidence of the absence of creative authority in the Orthodox rabbinate *from its point of view*. The dynamic attitude toward Jewish law, which distinguishes the Conservative standpoint from the static conception of Orthodoxy, would grant a far greater measure of authority to competent rabbinic scholarship in our day.

Having entered into the discussion which occasioned Rabbi Kellner's letter, I should like to comment on the advocacy by the editors of *The Reconstructionist* of the Hebrew University as "the principal symbol and instrument of Jewish spiritual unity." With all due deference to the sincerity of the leaders of Reconstructionism, they seem perpetually to be engaged in seeking the salvation of the Jewish religion everywhere except in the synagogue!

The Jewish Welfare Board and the Hebrew University are highly valuable institutions in Jewish life, with legitimate activities to maintain. Yet to make either agency the center and focal point of the Jewish religion is to distort their function and to make of the Jewish religion a vague and virtually meaningless concept.

A university, open to all shades of religious belief and to none, can be regarded as a great center of Jewish *religion*, only if, as the editors of *The Reconstructionist* imply, "religion" and "culture" are synonymous.

A service agency for community centers, whose frequently proclaimed *raison d'être* is that they avoid involvement in the Jewish religion, can become the unifying factor for the synagogues of America, as recently proposed in the columns of *The Reconstructionist*, only if "the Jewish religion" is simply an honorific designation for Jewish communal "activities."

If these conceptual identifications be accepted, we should be wandering about in a semantic cloud, which can scarcely lead us from the desert of religious indifference to the Promised Land of genuine spiritual revival.

ROBERT GORDIS

We have never advocated that either the Jewish Welfare Board or the Hebrew University shall be "the center and focal point of the Jewish religion."

We have advocated that the Jewish Welfare Board, because of its non-denominational approach and its experience during the war in meeting the spiritual needs of all kinds of Jews, shall take the initiative in creating an integrated Jewish community in which the functions of religion, recreation and education shall all receive their due, functions at present represented mainly by the synagogue, the center and the schools respectively.

As for the university, we advocated that it be regarded as the symbol and instrument of the spiritual unity of world-Jewry. Dr. Gordis should know that we regard Judaism not as a religious denomination but as the civilization of the Jewish people, which includes much more than is usually subsumed under the term *religion*. It is a *religious* civilization in that religion plays the predominant role in it, but Jewish civilization is most completely reflected in an institution that represents also the role of science and art in Judaism. No other institution than the Hebrew University does represent all these spiritual interests of world Jewry. No other institution, but only the Hebrew University, is qualified to serve as the symbol and instrument of Jewish spiritual unity.

—The Editors

Appreciates Our Comments on Jewish Book Month

Sirs:

I am very grateful to you for the editorial which appeared in *The Reconstructionist* on the subject of Book Month. Altogether, Book Month has received a great deal of support. Much of it is due to the attitude adopted by *The Reconstructionist* and other Jewish publications.

Of course, we of the Jewish Book Council of America will never be satisfied until every month is Book Month and every worthwhile book on a Jewish subject is widely read. We must of necessity rely on the more book-minded Jews of the United States to help spread the idea which we sponsor.

SOLOMON GRAYZEL,
President, Jewish Book Council